Respect Due the Home of the Naba

554 The kombéré is absolute master of his territory. His subjects must show him the same deference as he himself shows to the Mogho Naba.

However, even though he is not a noble, a minister of the emperor need not remove his cap to respond to the salute of a kombéré. On the contrary, the latter is required to humble himself, to give way before him just as he would before the Mogho Naba.

644 The nabiga (son of a naba), nakomsé (descendants of naba) and, still more, an ordinary Moaga are all categorically forbidden to wear their shoes or their caps at the court of the naba. The only exception to the rule is when the person is a Moslem convert, but even then he always leaves his shoes at the door. He may, however, wear his cap or turban. Shoes and headgear may be put on again only after the subject is 300 meters from the house of the naba. Sometimes, in places where custom is rigorously enforced, the person must be out of sight.

[687] Any infraction of these rules was punished severely by the lash and by confiscation of property by the samand'kamba of the naba [110] when the offender was not of the nobility, that is, was neither nabiga nor nakombga.

291 It is interesting to note that wearing the fez, originally one of the badges of chiefdom, was forbidden to the nabiga and all the more to the talga (ordinary Moaga). Today it is commonly worn by men and youths since European traders and shops have made common an article which was once very rare.

576 Shaking hands. One seldom sees a naba extend his hand to one
643 of his subjects or, more especially, to his brothers or fellow nobles (nakomsé).

There are two reasons for this prohibition: 1) the naba is supposed to maintain a certain distance between himself and his subjects, a normal practice; and 2) a superstitious belief has it that persons
● [754] harboring evil intentions toward the chief put magic powders on their hands to cause swellings which may develop into real abscesses.

562 girl is used to pay debts; a man borrows on the promise of giving his
584 daughter in marriage. She will be handed over, often with no bride
567 price other than the borrowed sum; and, contrary to the custom noted above, since she is considered a slave, her first daughter does not belong to the grandfather. A girl may also be given in exchange for her enslaved brother or uncle, who thus recovers his freedom. A man may be seriously ill and call a doctor who agrees to treat him on the condition that the patient's daughter be given to him if he gets well. The father does recover, and the girl is given in marriage to the fortunate doctor. Exchange of daughters also takes place: a native may give his daughter in marriage to another, who in turn gives him his own.

562 A girl is given in marriage by her mother only if she was born out
584 of wedlock, and her father is thus theoretically unknown. The sisters
848 of certain nabas are the only ones permitted to choose their husbands
[554] according to their own wishes and to leave them when they please.
593 The fickle existence they lead is easy to imagine! In all other cases the girl is given in marriage by her father, or by his heir if the father is dead. (1) The mother is not consulted, but since she cares for the

[754]

1. It would be onerous and indeed impossible to list all the various situations that may arise. The sorcerers quite often interfere, and who knows what goes through a sorcerer's mind! One case among many: a woman bore a daughter after raising several others who died immediately following marriage; the father consulted the sorcerer to find out whether he should promise this last daughter in marriage. The sorcerer stated that she must be left free to choose her own husband, or else she would die like her sisters. The father left her free.

daughter until the latter marries, she may through advice, promises, or even threats dissuade her from a certain match /29/ or welcome her if she runs away from a husband to whom she was given against her will.

755 must be procured. The leaf used to cover a wound must be held by means of a thin cotton cord with cowries attached at the end, three cowries for a boy, four for a girl. A hemp cord with three or four knots, worn around the neck, wrist, or any other part of the body, prevents swelling of that part and is also a master remedy against hair worms. Sometimes it is not so easy to secure the prescribed amulet, for instance, if it is the beak or claw of a hawk, a deer horn, or certain parts of a buffalo or koba. The poor Mossi goes to great pains to find this indispensable amulet.

763 Do as he may, sooner or later he must die. When an old man feels that his end is near, he calls his family and gives them his last instructions. He talks to his eldest son and tells him where his cattle and caches are to be found, who are his debtors and creditors. Sometimes death comes swiftly without warning, and the old man has no time to talk to his heir; a large part of the fortune is thus lost, because a Mossi in good health never tells anybody, especially not his /68/ children, where his property is, and those to whom he has entrusted it do not return it. Some Peul have made rather nice profits in this fashion.

761 The death of a young man or woman or more especially that of a small child is usually ascribed to an old woman who is said to have 754 eaten the child's soul, and some old women claim to have this secret. [683] The sorcerer points out the guilty woman who is seized and put to death. Every sudden or accidental death is ascribed to an evil spirit, and the funeral ceremonies reflect this.

762 Suicide is extremely rare, but it does occur. Here is one case where we knew the participants. A man quarreled with his wife. The wife, who was stronger than her husband, overwhelmed him in the fight, and the neighbors openly ridiculed him. The following day the husband was found hanging in his hut. A pit was hastily dug [766] in his nearest field, and he was tossed into it naked without further ceremony. Suicide is regarded as a criminal act, and even the corpse is punished for it.

763 Like all human beings, the Mossi fear death. No longer to eat millet mush or to drink dolo seems to them the greatest of misfortunes. Still, when a Mossi sees death approaching, he resigns himself to it and accepts it stoically. He rests his head on the lap of his first wife, and his other wives gather around him. His friends and the village elders sit before the soukala, and all wait silently for hours until the

776 makes noise in the bush under certain leafy trees, his cheeks will swell
753 out. The tisé talk, even during the day. It is their voices which are heard when the wind stirs the leaves. We had /81/ papaw seeds planted all around our dwelling. They had sprouted and grown well; the fruit was already ripening. One morning, no papaw trees were left in
[824] Koupéla! The naba had decreed that these were talking trees, that they would cause illness to those who had them in their soukala ... and the papaws had been cut down!

776 Fortunately, it is possible to protect oneself against the tisé. First,
782 those trees which shelter them may be felled, and the spirits will move elsewhere. Some very beautiful trees vanish thus from the villages. The tisé may also be appeased with sacrifices. Does this result in tree cult, dendrolatry? Indeed not! The Mossi clearly make the distinction between the tree and the spirit that inhabits it, and they sacrifice to the spirit. Sometimes also, a tree was planted on the
[769] grave of the elder who founded the village, and sacrifices are made to the ancestral spirit at the foot of the tree. Finally, there are fetishes more powerful than the tisé. It is enough to know which roots and barks the tisé do not like, to steep them in water, and to place the pot at the door of the hut. When a tiga sees this fetish, he invariably runs away. Some Peul are said to have the power to distinguish between those trees where spirits dwell and those where they do not, and to kill the former trees merely by rubbing them with butter! This must be done in a special way.

776 The kikirsi are imps, red or black all over, and only a few centi-
754 meters high. Their body has the same shape as ours, but it is much nimbler and more tenuous—something ethereal and impalpable that only the sorcerers can discern. The latter call them with a low
[534] whistle or by shaking a peculiarly shaped gourd that looks like a handle ending in a sphere. This gourd is dried without being opened, and the seeds gather in the sphere. The sorcerer makes noise by shaking this instrument, and the kikirsi flock to him singing.

776 There are good and evil kikirsi, and the good ones only do evil when forced to do so; for instance, when someone puts pepper in their sauce. They abhor pepper but they love honey, and every good housewife who wishes to preserve her honey covers it carefully with pepper to prevent the kikirsi from eating it. They are inordinately fond of sesame, and they dote on millet cakes (samsa); every woman who makes millet cakes offers them a few. People who eat samsa while walking are careful to drop a few crumbs to the ground. On the

776 The naba does so more than anyone else; on the Day of the Dead
782 (basra) he always makes sacrifices there, and usually the village elders accompany him.

776 A village may have several tangandé /sic/, but the protective
778 animal or animals—most often there are two—are the same in all the sacred groves, of which there are as many as there are tangandé /sic/. Nothing may be taken from a sacred grove; everything in it is sacred. No wood may be cut down, and it is forbidden even to gather dead wood which has fallen by itself. By the same token, the dry grass may not be set afire, not even in the area around the grove. If all precautions have been duly taken and fire nevertheless spreads to the sacred grove, nothing can be done and the village people are not held responsible. On the other hand, outsiders are prevented, by force if necessary, from taking anything whatever from the sacred grove. If the outsider is powerful and cannot be restrained, expiatory sacrifices are offered after his departure.

776 The tangandé is thus a guardian animal, and yet some tangamma
784 retaliate by afflicting the guilty party with diseases. If one of the sorcerers who eat souls (seuya) offers gifts to a tangandé, the latter will help him and refuse to restore the soul which has been entrusted to it, unless more substantial gifts are forthcoming. One may pray to a tangandé and make a vow, for example, promise it a goat or sheep if it kills a designated enemy. The goat is purchased pending the enemy's death. Sometimes the tangandé takes its time and
[787] several years go by. The spirit is chided and told to hurry, and finally decides to do away with the person in question. Then the goat is sacrificed.

776 Some people say that all tangamma come from the Fada N'Gourma
778 region, where the father of all tangamma is to be found. It is the
787 sorcerer's task to point out the tangamma and the place of their residence. Once, for example, a village had just been founded. The elders had found a piece of ground propitious to agriculture, in the vicinity of water, and had built their huts. At the beginning /84/ of the winter season, when the time came for sowing, they shared out the neighboring bush and proceeded to lay out their fields. One day a leopard driven out of its lair took to flight before their eyes and repaired to a thicket. Immediately the people were called, the thicket surrounded and searched thoroughly. No leopard was found. On the following day the same episode took place in the same spot. This happened three times, and every time it proved impossible to

776 tangandé in every detail either, for only the village may have a tangandé, and there does not seem to be any magic pact unless the sacrifices offered are considered as such a pact, which does not seem justified. The tangandé-animal is never sacrificed, and no special initiation takes place.

774 761 [775] The closest thing to totemism among the Mossi seems to be their concept of the human soul, and yet it is not, properly speaking, a totem in the sense indicated by these authors. Every man has a soul that lives on after death and takes the name of kyma, while during life it is called siga. Shortly before death it takes the name of toullé [197] /85/ in Ouagadougou or toundo in Koupela, but siga, toundo, kyma are one and the same thing, one and the same principle. According to the Mossi, this soul is an animal, invisible of course, a snake, a crocodile, a deer, a hare. The soul is related to this animal, it belongs to the same family, so that to kill a snake or a crocodile in a village where the soul of the inhabitants is a snake or a crocodile is to kill an inhabitant of the village; every individual related to the snake has a snake in the village to represent him, and he will die when his soul-animal dies.

774 784 Yet, and this runs counter to the definitions of totemism, the individual expects no aid from this animal, never sacrifices to it, and never kills it himself to renew the kinship pact. A person whose soul is a crocodile is forbidden to kill crocodiles in his own village, but he may kill them elsewhere, although he may never eat them, while he may kill the tangandé animal as long as he does so outside the tangandé, and he may eat it at any time. Some people, when they [766] find a dead soul-animal of their family near their village, render it funeral honors, weep, wail, and bury it as one of their own, but they offer it no gifts and hold no koureé. Generally it is merely covered with earth. The most widespread soul-animals are a kind of snake [582] (bosombodro) and the crocodile. Several families may have the same one, and marriage, although exogamic, is not forbidden between members of these families.

774 754 The soul may leave the body and in fact leaves it often, especially during the night. If children had a good time in a certain place, if they enjoyed themselves at someone's house, the soul returns there at night. This is when the worst is to be feared from the sorcerers; they may seize the soul by surprise, and its unfortunate owner will die.

774 828 761 In the course of a dream, the soul may warn its owner of a threatening danger. One day a native, whose village and name were told to me, dreamed that his enemy offered him a kola nut. Much anxiety ensued, for this is a sign used by the soul to indicate that an enemy threatens one with death. In such a case there is only one remedy, to deposit a few cowries on a nest of large red ants, so they will avert the disaster. The man set out immediately for the nearest ant nest. Alas, a snake bit him along the way, and he died before he could offer his gift to the ants! Such occurrences obviously make a profound imprint on the imagination of the natives, who immediately react with the sophism: post hoc, propter hoc. A few such cases are sufficient to anchor them forever in their superstitions, and innumerable such occurrences were related to me.

774 761 If the soul can leave the body, it is possible to seize it and to prevent it from re-entering its body, and this is why our Blacks do not like to be photographed. They say that there is an evil spirit in the box, who takes the soul and eats it. This is proved by the fact that the individual may later be seen on the piece of paper.

774 753 One becomes sick when his soul cannot re-enter the body because it is held prisoner by an evil sorcerer or by a kikiriga, and many sacrifices must be offered to obtain its release /86/ and return. Entreaties are usually directed to the tangandé in such cases, because it is stronger than all the other spirits, stronger even than the sorcerers, and because its function is to protect the village.

774 761 754 775 Sometimes the soul was so well hidden that the tangandé cannot find it: the sorcerer has eaten it right away; or the tangandé itself is in collusion; or the ancestral spirits are calling the sick person; or, finally, it is God who sent the disease. Nothing can be done, and the person dies. His soul changes names, and henceforth is called kyma. It leaves the body at the moment of death. If it was taken by a sorcerer or by the ancestral spirits, at the moment of death it leaves the sacred grove where it was held captive. It proceeds to the place of souls from where it will return to the grave whenever sacrifices are offered to it. It will also return if it wishes to afflict the survivors with a disease of some sort.

775 735 Is the soul punished for the evil it has done on earth and rewarded for the good? Opinions on the subject differ. Some say that when one gives alms to the poor, and the Mossi frequently do, when one is generous and hospitable, God takes all that has been given and sets

789 /103/ Happily, it is possible to avoid lightning. To achieve this,
821 it is necessary to find in the bush a white substance rather similar to hyena droppings which the natives call "rain dung," as well as certain tree roots. Part of these roots is left to soak in water for three days, and the rest is burned to ashes. A chicken is sacrificed to the tim. Then the water in which the roots have steeped is used to cook the millet mush, and the sauce is made with baobab leaves. All the soukala dwellers must eat this millet mush, and every one of them is marked on the back and chest with a cross of ashes mixed with karite butter. The horse and donkey, alone among the animals, are similarly marked on the back, chest, and inside the mouth. The huts are marked on the east side, the direction from which the rain comes, and above the entrance. Now there is nothing to be feared. We do feel, however, that lightning-rods are more effective.

759 All these tim, medicinal remedies, amulets, talismans, and
756 superstitious recipes, are prescribed either by true doctors who actually know the properties of herbs and effect real cures or by sorcerers. The doctors are often consulted. Since they specialize in certain diseases, they are consulted for those diseases alone. Those who have been cured by a medicine willingly make it known to friends who are afflicted with the same illness. The doctors are as numerous as the diseases which afflict mankind.

278 Some doctors are not merely healers but also poisoners, and they
674 are greatly feared. The surest way to get rid of an enemy is to consult them, but their fees are high. They have slow poisons which consume the victim gradually and the overwhelming ones which kill in a few hours. They put them in drinks, in millet mush, or more
754 often in kola nuts. There are also people, sorcerers rather than doctors, who claim the power to kill at a distance and who know how to practice sympathetic magic. Their prestige has waned since the French occupation because they have not managed to kill the Whites who settled in the country; but they say that our tim are more powerful than theirs.

754 The sorcerers are also numerous. There are those who take up the
756 call of their own accord and those who are born sorcerers. The former
791 are the bagré and seuya; the latter the tibo, bartibo, waongo, and nyonnyonsé. Pardon us these barbaric words, but they are impossible to translate.

791 The bagre is the nice, innocuous kind of sorcerer, who helps the
756 poor for a penny or two. He is consulted about everything. For example, what does the future hold? Will fire destroy my huts or won't

791 Anyone may become a sorcerer, and those who take up the call
756 are usually poor chaps who have nothing to live on, who do not have the strength to till the soil, or who simply want to live without working. When someone enters the brotherhood of bara, people say that he wants to learn how to be idle, and they laugh about it.

791 During the dry season the country is overrun with hordes of Gourounsi and Nankana, filthy and ragged, who claim to know everything and to possess a charm for every purpose, even to make peanuts grow. Led by a chief who speaks a few words of Mossi, they wander from one village to another, dancing and singing for the nabas like the mountebanks who perform at the wagon door of fortune tellers to attract the public... They are consulted, and they return home well rigged out thanks to the cowries they have gathered in Mossi country.

754 /105/ The seuya or soul-eaters are greatly feared. The death of
774 a native, especially that of a child, is often ascribed to them. They have the power of leaving the human body they inhabit and wandering about everywhere in search of a soul to eat. Fire is their vehicle, and they travel about at night on the will-o'-the-wisps that wander in the fields around the huts. They may be stopped by the trees and thrown to the ground, and those who possess an amulet more powerful than their can drive them away.

The seuya are extremely dangerous, for complete protection against them is impossible. They work by night. Every mortal soul leaves the body often during the night and goes wandering about. Woe to it if it should come upon a seuya. He will pounce upon the soul or put it under a big stone, and the unfortunate body that owns it will fall ill and eventually die. The only remedy is to offer a sacrifice to the tangandé, and the guardian animal of the village will go on a search until it locates and releases the unhappy soul; the tangandé causes it to re-enter the body, and the sick person gets well. If, however, the seuya ate the soul, or if he is in connivance with the tangandé, nothing can be done, and death swiftly ensues.

791 The bagré sorcerers can tell who is a seuya and who is not. Some
754 of them have a tim which permits them to distinguish the seuya in a crowd of people. They need only smoke a pipe, and the eyes of the soul-eating man will redden and fill with tears. Those accused of
754 being seuya usually deny the charge, and to call someone a seuya is
[578] one of the worst insults. We have already described the heinous death inflicted on these unfortunate people. Old women especially are

754 accused of eating the souls of little children, and I have known some who boasted of possessing this power!

The tibo are a family of sorcerers. People are born tibo, and the village they inhabit is called Tibin. The naba of this village has the special faculty of discerning all sorts of things, especially whether someone has an enemy, merely by gazing into a gourd filled with water in which a certain charm has been placed. A chicken was previously sacrificed on the gourd. This naba, and he alone, can also kill at a distance. To obtain his protection, it is necessary to bring him a goat, a chicken, millet flour mixed with water, and millet beer. Sooner or later the one designated will die! If it takes too long, the sorcerer always has an excuse handy.

754 778 The village of Tibin contains a hut where the tibo fetishes are lined in a row. These fetishes consist basically of clay pots containing water, branches, and tree leaves. They are covered with clay gourds of the kind used to cook sauce, and the sacrifices are made on these gourds. It is said that there are snakes and turtles in the pots, but only the tibo sorcerers can see them. Every village has its tibo jar in the naba's household, either at the door of his hut or hanging inside. These tibo are the dwellings of powerful kikirsi.

754 781 535 /106/ The bartibo are professional dancers. They have the faculty of distinguishing while dancing those who have the power of killing people, whether poison-givers or seuya. The bartibo themselves claim to have the power of riding the wind and going to kill anyone they wish. They specialize, however, in child-bearing charms for the benefit of sterile women.

754 292 The waongo also belong to a special family. People are born tibo, bartibo, waongo, or nyonnyonga. For their ceremonies, the waongo don garments made of the bark of baobabs which cover them completely. These strange garments completely conceal the person. A figure may be seen walking, but the person cannot be recognized, and a dreadful illness threatens those who dare to strike it. This is why people, when they see these shapeless forms, run away as fast as they can.

[761] The waongo wear masks when they celebrate the koure (death anniversary) of another waongo. They can ride the wind and inflict diseases; they can even kill if they wish.

754 The nyonnyonsé also ride the wind. The members of this family of sorcerers can kill anyone pointed out to them. People who wish to do away with an enemy go to a nyonnyonga and ask him how much he wants to kill the person they designate. The sorcerer asks for a cow, a sheep, anything whatever, and a chicken. The chicken is sacrificed on the handle of a hatchet, at the end where the iron is hafted, which is pierced with three holes and wrapped with thin cords. Following this sacrifice the sorcerer goes to sleep, and night or day his soul goes off with the wind, head down, hatchet in hand. When it meets the soul of the person who is to be killed, the sorcerer's soul strikes it with the hatchet and kills it, then returns to its own body. It seems that the female sorcerers are the most ferocious!

Anyone who wants it may obtain this power, but a fee is required. The lifespan of these sorcerers increases in proportion to the number of people they have killed, and those who wish to be initiated must offer them the life of one of their children or at least of a relative, for the sorcerers are not satisfied with a stranger or a slave.

It would be interesting to investigate the sacrifices and ceremonies which attend these initiations. It does seem that these tibo, waongo, and nyonnyonsé sorcerers belong to the realm of black magic, for the natives tell dreadful stories about them and list their victims by name. We must confess, however, that we were unable to secure any further trustworthy details about these sorcerers, and that we had no personal contact with any of them. We could not verify all that was told us about them, and therefore we shall not discuss the subject any further. In any case, these sorcerers if questioned would have told us nothing unless they had come to be converted.

754 575 These families of sorcerers are a small minority among the Mossi, and if they can be called closed sects, secret societies,, /107/ they are to our knowledge the sole ones extant. In Mossi country, therefore, there are properly speaking no secret societies, nothing like the sects found in Bambara country, (1) and this is a good thing.

1. Abbé Henry, L'ame d'un peuple africain /The Soul of an African People/, Bibliothèque Anthropos 1, 2, passim.

Likewise, there are no initiations, no secret cults celebrated at night, no esoteric doctrines. Is this because the nabas, intent on remaining the sole masters, would not allow a power greater than theirs to develop? Or is it for some other reason?

681 As far as penalties were concerned, Mossi justice was stern and thus ran counter to the "patriarchal" justice of the Bobo, Gourounsi, etc. Murder was always punished by death (except in the case of nobles). As for thefts, physical aggression, and matters involving debts, they were adjusted in the manner described when we discussed the Yarsé, who were subject to Mossi justice since they were settled in their territory /not translated/. [754] We shall not, therefore, go over this again. Let us merely note that the Mossi, being fetishists, were familiar with matters of sorcery.

695 754 At Dembo, in the Yatenga area, when a young person died suddenly, "red powder" would be mixed in water and everyone would drink of it while swearing by Tensé /Tr.: the earth deities/ that he was innocent. The culprits would die. In other villages of the Yatenga area, people suspected of dealing in sorcery had to drink earth taken from the spot where sacrifices were performed and diluted in water. Those /581/ who refused to drink and swear were killed. At Kabayoro, a Mossi village located in the canton of Koumbili, if a man or woman suddenly ill, it was said that it was So-and-So, a sorcerer, who had eaten the soul. If the sick person died, his hands were washed with water and the liquid was given to the sorcerer to drink. He had to swear his innocence and invoke death unto himself if he should lie. If guilty he died; if innocent the water did him no harm. If he refused to swear and drink, he was put in irons and left there to die of hunger and thirst. The bara /soothsayer/ played no role in such occurrences. It was the sick person who pointed out the sorcerer. If the patient failed to designate someone, however, this meant that he was simply dying of illness. [761]

701 Now for the army and police. "In case of war," says Moulins, "the province chiefs summoned the canton chiefs, who hastened forth with all their able-bodied men. They all gathered behind the Tamsaba and followed him.

625 "As for policing, it was taken care of by village and canton chiefs, who arrested culprits with the help of their own followers, or, if necessary, by summoning the whole male population of the village."

789 If someone tells you that you own many animals, or that they are
791 very handsome, this gives bad luck, as you know. So, to ward it off,
777 /593/ you grasp your grigri by slipping two fingers into the iron hook and two others into the curve of the horn, and then you hang it in your hut, or better still, you hang it from the neck of one of the threatened animals.

789 11. A small turtle completely enclosed in a small leather bag
791 along with a powdered aquatic leaf called kouri. If you have a
755 stomach-ache, you cover the flat side of the object with butter and rub your stomach with it.

789 12. A small piece of wood covered with lizardskin in the middle
791 and leather at the ends and prolonged at one end by an iron tip.
832 If one wishes for the favors of a woman who refuses to grant them, one comes near the cruel woman while gripping the grigri in the left fist, its tip pointing up. At the same time, one presses the woman's hand tightly with the right hand. This method of seduction is claimed to be infallible.

789 13. A koba horn covered with leather and prolonged at the broad
791 end with a chicken foot. Inside, the horn contains rice, salt, and
●754 soumbara. If you were threatened by a spell performed against you, you would slip the horn upon your head, with the thick end between the eyes and the pointed end behind the head. Then you would have nothing to fear.

14. A deer horn containing barkoundi leaves and closed with a lid adorned with a cowrie.

To prevent a sorcerer from eating the soul of a third party, you lift the lid with the aid of a knife covered with karité butter, you take with this knife a little of the contents of the horn, and you spread it on your forehead.

535 In addition to the bara and timisoba, the Mossi also have ouango.
532 "The ouango," says Marc (op. cit., pages 152 and 155), "are
575 dancers whose costume consists of a huge liana robe which covers the entire body and which is surmounted by a wooden mask painted red and black and usually representing /594/ the head of an animal. The ouango are members of a rather mysterious brotherhood. They have a special language, and the Mossi believe that anyone who says a word

the sacrifice and killed the donkey. He also slit the throat of a horse, a beef, and a sheep. (This eunuch in charge of guarding the tomb was called by the name of Naba Koutou, and in a way perpetuated the deceased Moro Naba. He was granted special privileges. If a man who was condemned to death ran away and reached the tomb, he was safe but became the eunuch's slave. Similarly, a captive who ran away from his master gained his freedom from the latter if he reached the grave, but became the slave of Naba Koutou. Finally, at that time, it was forbidden to ride by the hut on a donkey. Naba Koutou would seize the donkey, or at least demand a ransom in cowries before returning it. This applied to any animals who ran astray near the tomb. The tomb still exists nowadays, along with the Naba Koutou who watches over it, but the latter no longer enjoys the same privileges.)

We saw earlier that the Moro Naba had a sort of minister of the cult in the person of the Gandé Naba, high priest and sacrificer. There was also the Pouy Naba, or chief of the fetisheers, whose function was probably to mediate between the Mossi bara and timisoba as a whole and the central authorities.

Let us close this study of Mossi religion, which incidentally is quite incomplete and a mere outline, with a few words on the human sacrifices that were performed /597/ in the territory prior to our occupation, and a few words on circumcision as well.

"Human sacrifices," says Marc., p. 156, "definitely took place among the Mossi up to the time when we occupied the territory. Whenever a Moro Naba died at Ouagadougou, one of his wives and one of his horses were sent to Gambaga in order to be sacrificed on the tomb of Ouidiraogo (?) who is regarded as the mother of the first Moro Naba. Soon after the occupation of Ouagadougou by the French, the dethroned Moro Naba, Boukary Koutou, ordered the sacrifice of a black rooster, a black goat, a black donkey, a black beef, and a black slave on one of the mountains overlooking the White Volta. This, it seems, was bound to cause the immediate death of the new Moro Naba enthroned by Voulet."

As for circumcision, the Mossi circumcise boys and excise girls. Boys are circumcised when they are from eight to twelve years old, and thirty or forty of them are circumcised at one time. The

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

595 co-wives and other women of the extended families. Even the Catholic hus-
797 bands would not help their wives with household tasks requiring more than
182 one person, nor would they violate tradition by chatting with their wives except at night in their huts. Another factor is that after the Mossi Christian [846] woman has given birth to a child, she follows the traditional custom and goes back to her parents' home to remain there during the two or three years' lactation period. This imposes a great hardship on a Catholic husband because during this time he is left without wife or helpmate. In the extended family household there would have been women to take care of a man's material needs, and his mistresses would have taken care of his sexual needs. The Catholic can and does ask the mission for a young girl to take care of his material needs, but of course she is not expected to satisfy his sexual de- [837] sires. Obviously this arrangement is not satisfactory, and many Catholic men, with the acquiescence of their wives, keep mistresses. Dim Delobson comments:

> Ouagadougou has a large number of Christians, but does this mean that these people in their love for the church respect all her rules? Alas! there are a large number of Christians who oblige their lawful wives to leave the conjugal couch and make way for the accommodation of mistresses . . . in conformity with the old custom. But this is a subject which is too delicate to discuss further. I only note it in passing: *Noli me tangere* (1934:169).

797 Despite the influence of tradition on Mossi Catholics, I feel it would be a
794 mistake to say that the complexity of Catholic dogma is one of the drawbacks to missionary success in this country. One Mossi has already been made a bishop of the Catholic Church, and most of the proselytizing in Manga falls on the two Mossi priests and the five Mossi nuns. Under the supervision of two White Fathers, the Catholic children and adults are acquainted with the dogma and rituals of the church. The festivals are well attended and celebrated with as much pomp as possible. Although the Mass is sung in Latin, the Mossi have adapted some of their traditional tunes to the Mass, and use their own language for prayers and hymns. Catholics observe all the sacraments including Confession—a sacrament which is hazardous from the Mossi point of view, because man must lay bare his innermost thoughts to the priests, who, in the final analysis, are Europeans and thus administrators.

It is true that even the staunchest Catholics in Manga have not abandoned all belief in traditional rituals and religious credos. For example, many Mossi Catholics believe in the existence of sorcerers, but the Catholic Church [754] does not recognize the existence of sorcerers or such evil forces (I have met White Fathers who believe that there are unexplainable psychic and physical phenomena in Africa), and moreover has no way of dealing with them. "But," says Dim Delobson (1934:136), "the Mossi believe so strongly in the power of such entities, that even those converted to Christianity cannot always escape the action of malevolent practitioners." The result is that many Catholics desert the church when they believe that only traditional specialists can help them with personal problems. Catholic families easily aban-

513 The Mogho Naba slept in a grass hut in the palace
643 compound. Two
[342] [754] [775] [644]

reasons are given for the choice of a grass hut over a brick building: first, the grass hut was considered better protection against sorcerers, who were believed to induce storms that destroy buildings and their occupants; second, it was believed that the ruler's ancestors preferred to visit grass huts because it was easier for them to enter through the interstices in the walls. When the monarch retired for the night, one of his pages stood guard at the door. The Mogho Naba usually slept all night, but he occasionally made the rounds with a page to check on the palace guards or the safety (and virtue) of his wives.

643 [644] The routine of the Mogho Naba seldom varied. Only in times of danger or on great ceremonial occasions did protocol permit any major changes in court procedure. Normally, pages, ministers, and other court officials adhered very strictly to their traditional tasks.

The Mossi considered the king's office to be such a difficult one that even today they say, *Mogho Naba toumde ya yida fa* ("The Mogho Naba's task is the most difficult of all"). Nevertheless, the Mogho Naba's office was always eagerly sought, and considerable care had to be exercised to ensure that the right person was chosen. As soon as the incumbent Mogho Naba died, and even before he was buried, the Ouidi Naba, as prime minister, began the consultations leading to the selection of a new monarch. Mossi custom decreed that the eldest son of a previous ruler be chosen as the new Mogho Naba. This choice was not automatic, however, in view of the primary consideration that the person selected should have the skill to "keep" the country. Other qualifications for office were membership in the royal minimal lineage, soundness of body and mind, and sufficient age to command universal respect. Given these requirements and the lack of any provisions for a regency, it is not surprising that a dead ruler's sons, brothers, uncles, and even grandchildren—that is, his entire babissi—should have competed to "eat the nam" (accede to power).[12] Of the thirty-four kings who have ruled since Oubri, the founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty, twelve succeeded their brothers and twenty-two their fathers. Interestingly enough, there is some indication that at the beginning of the Ouagadougou dynasty, the successor of a king was usually chosen from among his brothers before the nam was passed on to the next generation.[13] For example, Oubri's four sons all reigned in turn before the kingship descended to the son of the last brother in office. Then, two of this brother's sons reigned before the nam descended to a new generation. Initially, then, seniority within the royal lineage, like seniority within the local ruling lineages, may have been determined by generation. On the other hand, accidental factors may have governed: a weak state organization may have

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